

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9147

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 10175

E. O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, VN, CB

SUBJ: FRENCH VIEWS CONCERNING CAMBODIA

BEGIN SUMMARY: FRENCH CONSIDER THAT SIHANOUK ACTUALLY VISITED CAMBODIA, BUT THINK THE TRIP WAS OF LESS SIGNIFICANCE THAN THEY WOULD HAVE ANTICIPATED. DESPITE SOME COMMON INTERESTS WHICH FRENCH CONSIDER SIHANOUK AND PHNOM PENH ELEMENTS SHARE, FRENCH CONTINUE TO SEE NO INDICATION OF ANY DIALOGUE AMONG THE KHMER PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. SIHANOUK VISIT TO CAMBODIA. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIAN AFFAIRS BOLLE INFORMED EMBOFF THAT THE QUAI HAD NOT YET RECEIVED REPORT FROM DELEGATE GENERAL IN HANOI ADDING TO PRESS COVERAGE OF SIHANOUK'S VISIT TO THE "LIBERATED AREAS" OF CAMBODIA. A SOVIET DIPLOMAT TOLD BOLLE THAT THE PRC HAD PUBLISHED TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF SIHANOUK IN CAMBODIA, ONE SHOWING IN THE BACKGROUND A SIGN READING "PHNOM PENH, 525 KILOMETERS" AND THE OTHER A VIEW OF ANGKOR. THE SOVIET SAID BOTH PHOTOGRAPHS WERE FAKES. BOLLE SAID THAT DESPITE THE OBVIOUS SOVIET EXPERTISE IN SUCH MATTERS, THE FRENCH BELIEVED SIHANOUK HAD INDEED VISITED CAMBODIA.

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2. BOLLE COMMENTED THAT THE FRENCH THOUGHT THAT THE TRIP WAS NOT THE SUCCESS WHICH THEY WOULD HAVE EXPECTED. THE VISIT WAS NOT ANNOUNCED WHILE IT WAS TAKING PLACE AND ALSO THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE VISIT INCREASED POPULAR ENTHUSIASM FOR SIHANOUK CAUSE IN CAMBODIA. BOLLE SAID THAT THE FRENCH CONTINUED TO THINK THAT DESPITE THE CHANGES SINCE 1970, SIHANOUK (SOME OF HIS ENTOURAGE AND WHAT HE REPRESENTED) REMAINED ONE OF THE SEVERAL ELEMENTS WHICH MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN ANY ANALYSIS OF THE CAMBODIAN SCENE. BOLLE ADMITTED THE FRENCH WERE BADLY INFORMED ABOUT THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS WHO WERE OBVIOUSLY A MORE IMPORTANT POWER FACTOR.

3. NO INDICATION OF DIALOGUE AMONG KHMER. BOLLE SAID THAT HE SAW NO NEW ELEMENT WHICH WOULD GIVE ANY GROUNDS FOR HOPES OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES IN CAMBODIA. HE TALKED RECENTLY WITH THIMOUNN MUMM (GRUNK MINFINANCE) WHO WAS PASSING THROUGH PARIS AND ASKED HIM WHETHER THERE COULD BE INFORMAL TALKS WITH PHNOM PENH. THIMOUNN MUMM SAID THAT THE GRUNK COULD NOT TALK WITH TRAITORS. WHEN PRESSED, HE ADMITTED THAT THEY CONSIDERED ONLY SOME TEN OF THE GKR LEADERS AS TRAITORS, BUT THEN SAID THAT THE OTHERS HAD ONLY TO JOIN THE FUNK WHICH WAS OPEN TO ALL EXCEPT THE TEN.

4. BOLLE SAID LONG BORET HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT PHNOM PENH WOULD BE WILLING TO TALK WITH THE OTHER SIDE, BUT HE SAW NO DISPOSITION OF ANY OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE OTHER SIDE TO TALK. THE FRENCH CONTINUED TO HOPE THAT THE SIHANOUK/ LON NOL IMPASSE COULD BE AVOIDED BY CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN PENN NOUTH AND A PHNOM PENH REPRESENTATIVE SUCH AS IN TAM OR SON SANN. FRANCE WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR SUCH CONTACTS AS IN THE CASE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. BOLLE COMMENTED THAT SIHANOUK AND SOME OF THE INSURGENT FORCES MORE RESPONSIVE TO HIM THAN TO THE HANOI- ORIENTED CADRE OF THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAD CERTAIN VIEWS IN COMMON WITH LEADERS IN PHNOM PENH: CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND ANTI- VIETNAMESE SENTIMENT. HOWEVER, BOLLE SAW NO CONCRETE INDICATION THAT SUCH COMMON INTEREST MIGHT BE TRANSLATED INTO ACTIONS LEADING TOWARD A DIALOGUE.

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